

Island Caribs

The **Island Carib**, also known as the **Kalinago**^[3] or simply **Caribs**, are an indigenous people of the Greater and Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean. They have descended from the Mainland Caribs (Kalina) of South America as well as the Arawakan people of the Greater Antilles.^[4] The women and children spoke an Arawakan language known as Eyeri. Meanwhile the men spoke a carib pidgin language of Karina origins.^[4]

At the time of Spanish contact, the Kalinagos were one of the dominant groups in the Caribbean, which owes its name to them. They lived throughout northeastern South America, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados,the Windward Islands, Dominica, and possibly the southern Leeward Islands. Historically, it was thought their ancestors were mainland Caribs, known as the Igneri. The Igneri had conquered the islands from their previous inhabitants. However, linguistic and archaeological evidence disputes the notion of a mass emigration and conquest; the Island Carib language appears not to have been Cariban, but Arawakan, like that of their neighbors, the Taíno. Irving Rouse and others suggest that a smaller group of mainland Caribs conquered the islands without displacing their inhabitants, eventually adopting the local language but retaining their traditions of a South American origin.^[5]

In the early colonial period, the Caribs had a reputation as warriors who raided neighboring islands. They practiced cannibalism.^[6] According to the Spanish conquistadores, the Carib Indians were cannibals who regularly ate roasted human flesh. There is evidence as to the taking of human trophies and the ritual cannibalism of war captives among both Carib and other Amerindian groups such as the Arawak and Tupinamba. Today, the Caribs and their descendants continue to live in the Antilles. The Garifuna or "Black Caribs", a group of mixed Carib, Arawak and African ancestry, also live principally in Central America.

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Kalinago

Kalhíphona





Carib family (by John Gabriel Stedman 1818)

Total population

4,000^{[1][2]}

Regions with significant populations

 Dominica and  Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, formerly throughout the Lesser Antilles and South America

Languages

English, Dominican Creole French, formerly Island Carib

Related ethnic groups

Garifuna, Black Carib, Taíno

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History

The Caribs are believed to have migrated from the Orinoco River area in South America to settle in the Caribbean islands about 1200 AD, according to carbon dating. Over the two centuries leading up to Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Caribbean archipelago in 1492, the Caribs mostly displaced the Maipurean-speaking Taínos by warfare, extermination, and assimilation. The Taíno had settled the island chains earlier in history, migrating from the mainland.^[7]



Greenstone ceremonial axe. From shell midden, Mt Irvine Bay, Tobago, 1957.

Caribs traded with the Eastern Taíno of the Caribbean Islands.

The Caribs produced the silver products which Ponce de Leon found in Taíno communities. None of the insular Amerindians mined for gold but obtained it by trade from the mainland. The Caribs were skilled boat builders and sailors. They appeared to have owed their dominance in the Caribbean basin to their mastery of warfare.

According to Floyd, "The question arose in Columbus's time whether Indians could be enslaved and Queen Isabel had ruled against it. At about the same time, however, Ojeda, Bastidas, and other explorers voyaging along the

Spanish Main had been attacked by Indians with poisoned arrows - all such Indians were considered Caribs - which took a considerable toll of Spanish lives. These attacks and the evidence some of the perpetrators, at least, were cannibals, provided the rationale for the decree authorizing enslavement of Caribs." On 3 June 1511, king Ferdinand declared war on the Caribs.^[8] Island Caribs nevertheless mostly succeeded in keeping their islands unoccupied by Spaniards.

In the 17th century, Island Caribs were displaced with a great loss of life by a new wave of European invaders: French and English. Most fatalities resulted from Eurasian infectious diseases such as smallpox, which they had no natural immunity to, as well as warfare.

In 1660, France and England signed with Island Caribs the Treaty of Saint Charles that stipulated that Caribs would evacuate all the Lesser Antilles except for Dominica and Saint Vincent, which were recognized as reserves. However, the English would later ignore the treaty and ended up annexing both islands in 1763.^[9] To this date, a small population of around 3,000 Caribs survives in the Carib Territory in northeast Dominica.

The 'Black Caribs' (later known as carifuna) of St. Vincent (St. Vincent has some "Yellow Caribs" as well) were descended from a group of enslaved Africans who were marooned from shipwrecks of slave ships, as well as slaves who escaped here. Chief Kairouane and his men from Grenada jumped off of the "Leapers Hill" rather than face slavery under the French invaders and have served as an iconic representation of the Caribs spirit of resistance.^{[10][11][12]} They intermarried with the Carib and formed the last native culture to resist the British. It was not until 1795 that British colonists deported the Black Caribs to Roatan Island, off Honduras. Their descendants continue to live there today and are known as the Garifuna ethnic group. Carib resistance delayed the settlement of Dominica by Europeans. The Black Carib communities that remained in St. Vincent and Dominica retained a degree of autonomy well into the 19th century.



Drawing of a Carib woman (1888)

The last known speakers of Island Carib died in the 1930s, and the language is extinct.

People

The Kalinago of Dominica maintained their independence for many years by taking advantage of the island's rugged terrain. The island's east coast includes a 3,700-acre (15 km²) territory formerly known as the Carib Territory that was granted to the people by the British Crown in 1903. There are only 3,000 Caribs remaining in Dominica. They elect their own chief. In July 2003, the Kalinago observed 100 Years of Territory. In July 2014, Charles Williams was elected Kalinago Chief,^[14] who succeeded Chief Garnette Joseph.

Several hundred ethnic Carib descendants live in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, the U. S. Virgin Islands, St. Kitts & Nevis, Antigua & Barbuda, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Trinidad and St. Vincent. "Black Caribs," the descendants of the mixture of African slaves live in St. Vincent whose total population is unknown. Some ethnic Carib communities remain on the American mainland, in countries such as Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, French Guiana, Guyana and Suriname in South America, and Belize in Central America. The size of these communities varies widely.

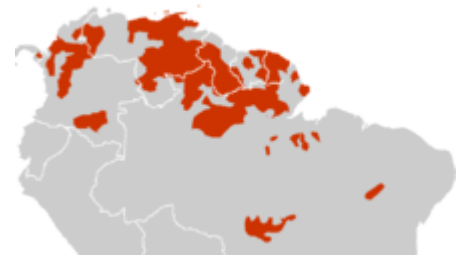
Religion

The Caribs are believed to have practiced polytheism. As the Spanish began to colonise the Caribbean area, they wanted to convert the natives to Catholicism.^[15]

Music

Garifuna music from the Garifuna people, the descendants of Caribs, Arawak and West African people, is quite different from the music in the rest of Central America. The most famous form is punta. Its associated musical style, which has the dancers move their hips in a circular motion. An evolved form of traditional music, still usually played using traditional instruments, punta has seen some modernization and electrification in the 1970s; this is called punta rock. Traditional punta dancing is consciously competitive. Artists like Pen Cayetano helped innovate modern punta rock by adding guitars to the traditional music, and paved the way for later artists like Andy Palacio, Children of the Most High and Black Coral. Punta was popular across the region, especially in Belize, by the mid-1980s, culminating in the release of Punta Rockers in 1987, a compilation featuring many of the genre's biggest stars.

Other forms of Garifuna music and dance include: hungu-hungu, combination, wanaragua, abaimahani, matamuerte, laremuna wadaguman, gunjai, sambai, charikanari, eremuna egi, paranda, berusu, punta rock, teremuna ligilisi, arumahani, and Mali-amalihani. Punta is the most popular dance in Garifuna culture. It is performed around holidays and at parties and other social events. Punta lyrics are usually composed by the women. Chumba and hunguhungu are a circular dance in a three-beat rhythm, which is often combined with punta. There are other songs typical to each gender, women having eremwu eu and abaimajani, rhythmic a cappella songs, and laremuna wadaguman, men's work songs, chumba and hunguhungu, a circular dance in a three-beat rhythm, which is often combined with punta.



Distribution of Cariban languages in South America.^[13]



Carib Warrior (Mixed Media Sculpture by artist George S. Stuart)

Drums play a very important role in Garifuna music. There are primarily two types of drums used: the *primero* (tenor drum) and the *segunda* (bass drum). These drums are typically made of hollowed-out hardwood such as mahogany or mayflower, with the skins coming from the peccary (wild bush pig), deer, or sheep.

Also used in combination with the drums are the *sisera*. These shakers are made from the dried fruit of the gourd tree, filled with seeds, then fitted with hardwood handles.

Paranda music developed soon after the Garifunas arrival in Central America. The music is instrumental and percussion-based. The music was barely recorded until the 1990s, when Ivan Duran of Stonetree Records began the Paranda Project.

In contemporary Belize there has been a resurgence of Garifuna music, popularized by musicians such as Andy Palacio, Mohobub Flores, & Adrian Martinez. These musicians have taken many aspects from traditional Garifuna music forms and fused them with more modern sounds. Described as a mixture of punta rock and paranda. One great example is Andy Palacio's album *Watina*, and *Umalali: The Garifuna Women's Project*, both released on the Belizean record label Stonetree Records.

In the Garifuna culture, there is another dance called Dugu. This dance is a ritual done for a death in the family to pay their respect to their loved ones. In 2001, Garifuna music was proclaimed one of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO.

Ancestral honor

The Island Carib word *karibna* meant "person". It became the origin of the English "cannibal".^[16] Although, among the Caribs, it was apparently associated with rituals related to the eating of war enemies. There is evidence as to the taking of human trophies and the ritual cannibalism of war captives among both Arawak and other Amerindian groups such as the Carib and Tupinamba.^[17]

The Caribs had a tradition of keeping bones of their ancestors in their houses. Missionaries, such as Père Jean Baptiste Labat and Cesar de Rochefort, described the practice as part of a belief that the ancestral spirits would always look after the bones and protect their descendants. The Caribs have been described as vicious and violent people in the history of the people who battled against other tribes.

Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano was killed and said to have been eaten by Carib natives on what is now Guadeloupe (French West Indies) in 1528 (before called *Karukera* by the Amerindian people which means “the island of beautiful waters”), during his third voyage to North America, after exploring Florida, the Bahamas and the Lesser Antilles. Historian William Riviere^[18] has described most of the cannibalism as related to war rituals.

Kalinago canoe project

In 1997 Dominica artist Jacob Frederick and Tortola artist Aragorn Dick Read joined forces and set out to build a traditional canoe based on the fishing canoes still used in Dominica, Guadeloupe and Martinique. The project consisted of a return voyage by canoe to the Orinoco delta to meet up with the Kalinago tribes still living in those parts. On the way a cultural assessment was carried out and ties were reestablished with the remaining communities along the island chain. A documentary, *The Quest of the Carib Canoe*, was made by the BBC.^[19] The expedition sent shock waves through the Lesser Antilles as it made the local governments aware of the presence and the struggles for cultural survival of the Kalinago.

See also

- [Carib Expulsion](#)
- [Carib language](#)
- [Cariban languages](#)
- [Kalinago Genocide of 1626](#)
- [Santa Rosa Carib Community](#)

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External links

- The Quest of the Carib Canoe (http://www.nativenetworks.si.edu/eng/orange/quest_of_the_carib_canoe.htm)
- Mainland Carib artwork (<http://www.nmai.si.edu/searchcollections/results.aspx?regid=301>), National Museum of the American Indians
- Yurumein (Homeland): A Documentary on Caribs in St. Vincent (<http://indigenousreview.blogspot.com.au/#stash.9WFLBXgH.dpuf>)
- Guanaguanare - the Laughing Gull. Carib Indians in Trinidad - includes 2 videos (http://guanaguanaresingsat.blogspot.com.au/2011_07_01_archive.html)

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